

Our Safe and Healthy Responses to Terrorism

The County of San Diego's Health and Human Services Agency's Adult/Older Adult and Children's Mental Health Services realize that terrorist events are traumatic as well as tragic. Strong, deep reactions occur in both adults and children.

Some brief suggestions for dealing with the psychological and emotional impact of these events are presented here.

The goal of terrorism is to make people fearful or intimidated, and to paralyze commerce and government. Americans have power over how we respond to these events, and we have chosen to respond with dignity, community, heroism and patriotism.

"We are all in this together" is not only a slogan, it is a commitment the staff of County of San Diego's Mental Health Services makes to the public we serve.

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Mental Health
Information & Referral Crisis and
Suicide Intervention
24-hours a day/7 days-a-week
Professional counselors
will answer your call.
Access to all languages.

ACCESS & CRISIS LINE
1-800-479-3339



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WHEN TERROR STRIKES

Tips For Handling The Crisis



County of San Diego
Adult/Older Adult & Children's
Mental Health Services

TIPS For Handling The Crisis

Everyone reacts to disasters differently. Some of us will seem to have no unusual reaction; others will be frightened, sad, worried or agitated. Do not expect that you will or should react in any particular way or that something is wrong with you if your reaction differs from that of family members or friends.

Some common reactions to learning about a terrorist attack include:

- Wanting to talk about it at length and repeatedly. People may want to say when they first heard or saw the news on radio or TV, or discuss how they felt then or feel now.
- Shock, disbelief, disorientation, fear, worry about safety, concern about loved ones, and grief. After the initial shock wears off, people have mood swings, crying, jumpiness, irritability, fatigue, feeling overwhelmed, trouble concentrating, difficulty sleeping, nightmares and feeling numb or not particularly upset. These are normal; sometimes people seem to “shut down” for a while after a disaster.
- Wanting to move—to pace, run, play. It is often difficult to sit still after receiving jarring news. Children especially may need to move about.

What should you do?



- Be with friends and/or family, and talk openly about what happened and how you feel about it.

• Follow your usual routine of physical activity and exercise. Eat well and try to

get rest, even if your sleep is not as restful as usual.

- Do things other than watching or listening to news of the disaster.
- Avoid self-medication such as alcohol, caffeine or other drugs.
- Try to understand at least the major details about what happened and evaluate the chances that it could happen again.
- Seek professional help if disaster-related emotional or psychological problems persist or become severe. The County of San Diego's Adult/Older Adult and Children's Mental Health Services has telephone counselors available 24 hours a day, seven days a week, to help people of all ages. Please call, toll free, **1-800-479-3339** for crisis

counseling, as well as referral to grief and loss counseling, stress counseling or face-to-face mental health counseling services. Deaf and hard-of-hearing persons may call the TTY 1-619-641-6992.

- Consult your spiritual advisor(s).
- Volunteer at a local crisis center or become a blood donor.
- Do not harbor resentment against another cultural or ethnic group.

How can you help your children?



- Spend time with them, and reassure them that you or another responsible adult will be keeping them safe.
- Encourage them to talk about their experiences and feelings. Listen to their stories, even if they are repeated over and over. But respect their wishes if they choose not to talk.
- Share your experience and at least some of your feelings with them. It may “normalize” their own reactions.
- Seek professional advice if their problems persist or are severe.
- Monitor the amount of television coverage your children watch, especially children up to the age of four.
- Try to keep a regular schedule of activities such as eating, playing, studying, and going to bed to help restore a sense of security and normalcy. Emotions and problems with concentrating may interfere with studying for a while.

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